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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON CAFTA, MAY 03, 2005

1. On 5/03, the Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" published an editorial entitled "Moral." "A few hours before the Salvadoran president met with Condoleezza Rice, he announced that Central American presidents would meet with Bush in Washington to negotiate the approval of CAFTA."

"It's interesting that Central Americans are received 'in bulk,' a signal that the importance of these countries is not as individuals."

"The South Americans, on the other hand, defied the preferences of the North, and gave an example of what the 'blocks' are capable of doing. Unfortunately Central America lost their chance due to lack of vision and opportunity in the OAS elections."

"Is there a moral to all this? Surely there is, but who knows if we understand it."

Editorial in San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "La Prensa" entitled "Will CAFTA be ratified?" "CAFTA critics cross their fingers hoping that the U.S. Congress won't ratify the treaty."

"Will the U.S. Congress ratify CAFTA? I dare to bet without hesitation that CAFTA will be ratified for four reasons: First, our treaty looks like child's play next to NAFTA. Second, in half a century the U.S. Congress hasn't rejected a commercial treaty negotiated by the USTR. Third, the White House knows that not only CAFTA is at stake, but so is his commercial policy. Fourth, Congressional committees are still discussing CAFTA."

"Moral: Let's not continue crossing our fingers that the vote will be in favor or against it. The big challenge is to continue with the legal and institutional decision-making that will allow CAFTA's benefits to increase and the damages to decrease once it comes into effect, surely to happen on January 2006."

Palmer